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ABSTRACT

This paper presents the results of a research study on the effects of social background factors on psychological orientations and child rearing patterns of interracially married mothers, both black and white. Data were gathered in interviews with 64 interracial couples. Background information reviewed on the interracially married mothers includes: educational and occupational level, length of marriage, age, and family size. Also described are mothers' perceptions of discrimination, the effects of discrimination on their marriages, childrens' ethnic group, and childrens' ethnic identity development. Finally, the effects of interracial marriage on child raising patterns are discussed. (APM)

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THE EFFECTS OF SOCIAL BACKGROUND FACTORS ON PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS AND CHILD REARING PATTERNS OF INTERRACIALLY MARRIED MOTHERS.

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The Effects of Social Background Factors on the Psychological Orientations and Child Rearing Patterns of Interracially Married Mothers.

Introduction

The United States has consistently maintained a tradition of inequitable racial policies and has been a leader in opposing interracial marriage. The need to understand this phenomonen has importance not only for accepting and respecting the rights of individuals, but also for guiding the future of society. The fundamental premise of freedom of choice is at stake. W.E. DuBois (1920) strongly asserted: "The impudent and vicious demand that all colored folk shall write themselves down as brutes by a general assertion of their unfitness to marry other decent folk, is a nightmare."

Although race mixture has occurred extensively throughout history, the United States has accrued an extensive record of miscegenation legislation specifically aimed at prohibiting marriage between black and white. A Maryland statute of 1661 is considered the first Miscegenation Law in America. This law deplored the fact that there were many cases of intermarriage between white female servants and Negro slaves. The law stated that "if a free-born white woman married a Negro slave,

she would be required to serve her husband's master throughout her slave husband's life, and further, that children born of such marriages would be regarded as slaves." (Gordon, 1964: 222-223)

During the nineteenth century thirty-eight states passed legislation prohibiting Black-White marriages. Twenty-eight states, including California had active anti-Black-White marriage statutes in 1913. California's statute was repealed in 1949 in the case of Lippold versus Perez. The last miscegenation restriction was found unconstitutional in 1968 by the U.S. Supreme Court, Chief Justice Earl Warren presiding, in the case of Loving versus Commonwealth of Virginia. Rationale for the final repeal of miscegenist prohibitions in the United States was based on the Fourteenth Amendment. It is noteworthy that the Fourteenth Amendment was passed by the 39th Congress in 1868 - one hundred years before the Loving case was declared unconstitutional.

Changed laws, obviously do not change peoples' attitudes. In a 1958 Gallup Poll, 92% of the white population surveyed, disapproved of such unions. (Reported in Life, January 9, 1970:104). In a 1971 survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago (Greeley and Sheatsley, 1971), 52% of the respondents indicated that there should still be laws against marriages between Black and White. A recent report by Yankelovick (April, 1931) on the changing norms guiding American Life, reported that 61% of those questioned agreed that interracial marriages were not morally wrong.

Despite a 300 year history of legal prohibition against Black and White marriages, a general dominant attitude of

disapproval, and continual racial strife, there has been a steady increase in the numbers of interracial marriages over the past decades. The 1960 United States Census reported 51,409 Black-White unions, and the 1970 Census indicated that 64,789 Black-White couples resided in the United States. From an historical perspective, these figures seem a bit understated. Ernest Porterfield (1973) claimed that over one million persons in the United States have chosen a mate of a different race, with 75% being Black-White marriages.

Although the number of Black-White marriages remains comparatively small, a recent Census Bureau Report (L.A. Times, January 14, 1979) indicated that marriages between black husbands and white wives increased by 132% from 1970 to 1977, while marriages between white husbands and black wives increased by 25%.

Few truths are known about individuals who have chosen to marry interracially. Perhaps few truths exist. Yet, social scientists have erred in perpetuating ungrounded conclusions about persons who have chosen this lifestyle. (Beigel, 1966; Brayboy, 1966; Smith, 1966; Teicher, 1968; Wirth and Goldhammer, 1944.) Most empirical investigations to date have simply recorded and interpreted data gathered from incomplete marriage records or based conclusions on scant interview schedules or reports. (Baber, 1937; Burma, 1963; Golden, 1954; Heer, 1965; Monahan, 1972, 1973, 1976 a/b; Norton, 1970; Panunzio, 1942; Parela, 1964; Weinberger, 1966.)

The research presented today will look beyond these simple recordings of demographic data, and will explore psychological and behavioral characteristics which typify life in contemporary interracial families. It will investigate relationships between demographic characteristics, mothers perceptions of discrimination and related psychological orientations,mothers perceptions of their children's ethnic identity formation, and child rearing patterns. (See Figure #1.)

Methodology

The analysis presented in this discussion will be based on selected data from an extensive study of 64 interracially married couples. To provide a background for todays talk, I will first briefly describe the larger investigation.

A sample of sixty-four (64) Black-White married couples (128 individuals) were subjects for the study. All families lived in Southern California. Fifty of the families were white women married to black men and fourteen families consisted of white men married to black women. Efforts were made to involve families who had been married for varied lengths of time. (The range was from 2 months to 36 years.) Contacts for this sample population were made through personal acquaintances, school personnel,and referrals from interviewees.

Subjects were initially contacted by telephone by the researcher. (In 3 instances, subjects were approached in a person to person situation at a grocery store, a toy store and at the beach.) After an introduction of the research project with a brief explanation of the purpose(s) of the study, contacts

were asked two questions: (a) if they were legally married and (b) what ethnic group did they consider themselves.

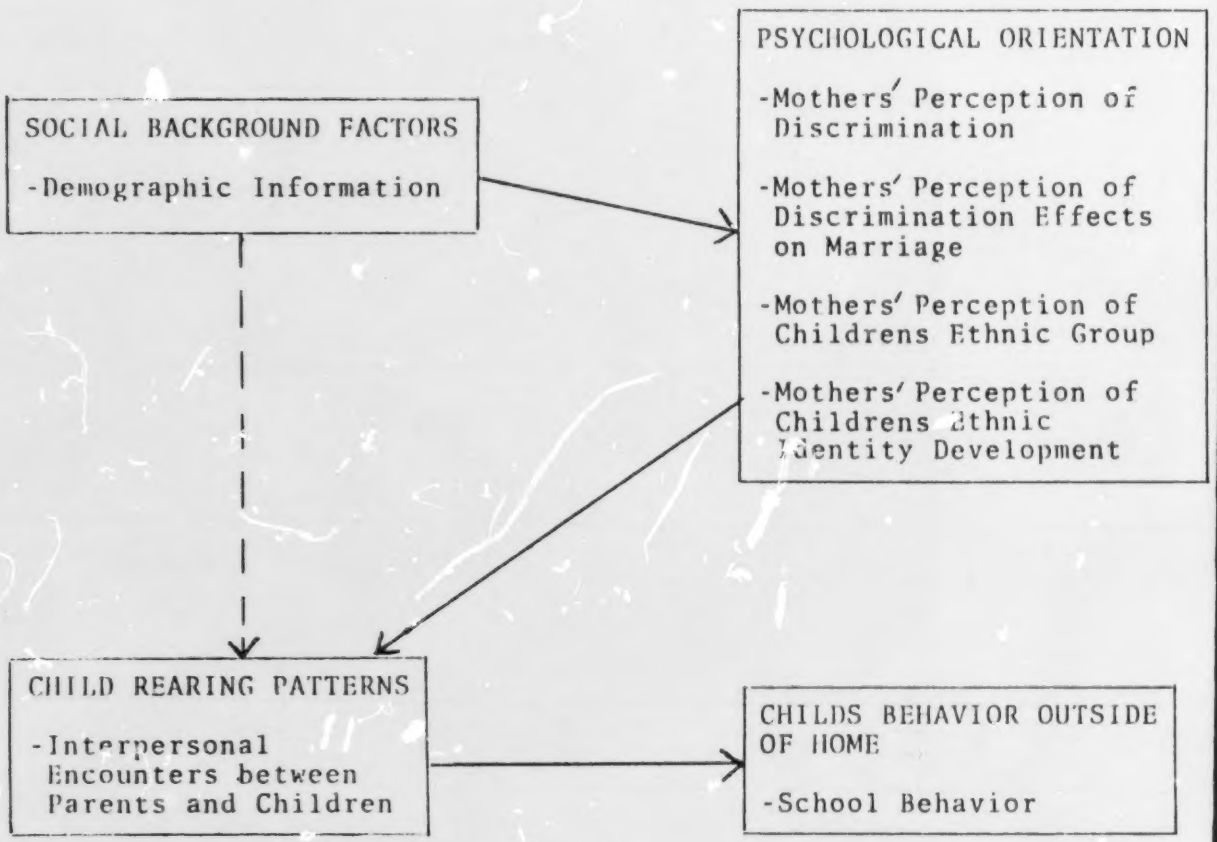
Each family had to meet two requirements before an interview appointment was arranged. They had to be legally married and living together, and second they had to identify themselves as Black and White respectively (or a synonym thereof).

Each person was individually interviewed in their home at a convenient time. A typical interview lasted approximately 3 hours, although they ranged from 45 minutes to 6 hours. Forced choice, short answer and open-ended questions were used in the interview schedule.

The interview schedule included five sections: The first section, personal information, elicited inter-generational demographic information. The second section was concerned with marital history: dating patterns, familial reactions to the interracial marriage, shared interests and common activites of the conjugal unit and areas of disagreements. The third section of the interview was concerned with adult social relationships. This included a history of contact with different racial groups, values, associations and group affiliations, and perceived discrimination. The fourth section was devoted to information about children of interracial marriages. Parents were asked questions regarding their childrens' experiences and their perceptions of identity formation. Finally, the last section of the interview schedule elicited participants advice to others, and any miscellaneous thoughts, questions or comments.

The analysis today uses selected data from this larger investigation to test the hypothesis that there are unique psychological and social patterns which characterize (a) Black mothers who have been married over 10 years; (b) Black mothers who have been married 10 years or less; (c) White mothers who have been married longer than 10 years; and (d) White mothers who have been married 10 years or less.

Figure 1: THEORETICAL MODEL OF THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN MOTHERS BACKGROUND, PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS AND CHILD REARING PATTERNS.


SOCIAL BACKGROUND FACTORS
-Demographic Information
PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATION
-Mothers' Perception of Discrimination
-Mothers' Perception of Discrimination Effects on Marriage
-Mothers' Perception of Childrens Ethnic Group
-Mothers' Perception of Childrens Ethnic Identity Development
CHILD REARING PATTERNS
-Interpersonal Encounters between Parents and Children
CHILDS BEHAVIOR OUTSIDE OF HOME
-School Behavior

SOCIAL BACKGROUND FACTORS

Population Demographics: The sample that provides the data for this paper consists of 37 interracially married mothers. Thirty (30)of these mothers are white women currently married to black men, and 7 are black women currently married to white men.

Educational Level: Ninety-seven (97) percent of these women completed high school and 82% continued to college. Thirty-four (34) percent completed a 4 year college course with either a Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science Degree,and 18% have completed a masters degree. Fifty-seven (57) percent of the black mothers and 50% of the white mothers completed a college education. (See Table #1.)

Occupational Level: Forty-one (41) percent of the mothers are professionally employed (including both major professionals and professional categories). Nineteen (19) percent of the mothers are at home full time (domestic engineers), with one-third of the women who have been married 10 years or less in this category. (This is an obvious situation as the children are younger and needs for constant parenting are greater.) Thirty-five (35) percent of the mothers were employed in the clerical/sales area, and 3% in the semi-skilled/unskilled category. Another 3% of the mothers are currently students. (See Table #2.)

Length of Marriage: The average length of marriage of these mothers is 14.5 years with a range from 2 months to 32 years. The average length of marriage of the white women was 12.5 years,

TABLE #1

EDUCATION LEVEL COMPLETED BY 37 WOMEN MARRIED INTERACIALLY (IN PERCENTAGES)

EDUCATION LEVEL	SHORT-TERM (Married 10 years or less)			LONG-TERM (Married More than 10 years)			TOTAL
	Black (N=3)	White (N=13)	Total (N=16)	Black (N=4)	White (N=17)	Total (N=37)	
Ph. D. or Higher	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø
Masters Degree	.66	Ø	.13	.25	.24	.24	.18
Bachelor of Arts or Bachelor of Science Degrees	Ø	.46	.38	.25	.29	.33	.34
Partial College	.33	.38	.38	.25	.24	.24	.30
High School Graduate	Ø	.08	.06	.25	.24	.24	.16
Did not complete High School	Ø	.08	.06	Ø	Ø	Ø	.02

TABLE #2

OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL OF 37 WOMEN MARRIED INTERRACIALLY

OCCUPATIONAL LEVEL	SHORT-TERM (Married 10 years or less)			LONG-TERM (Married More than 10 years)			TOTAL
	Black (N=3)	White (N=13)	Total (N=16)	Black (N=4)	White (N=17)	Total (N=21	N=37
Major Professional	.33	Ø	.06	Ø	Ø	Ø	.03
Professional	.33	.23	.25	.25	.53	.48	.38
Clerical/Sales	Ø	.38	.31	.50	.35	.38	.35
Craftsmen	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø
Semi-Skilled/ Unskilled	Ø	.08	.06	Ø	Ø	Ø	.03
Student	Ø	Ø	Ø	Ø	.06	.04	.03
Domestic Engineer (Housewife)	.33	.31	.31	.25	.06	.10	.19

and the average length of marriage for the black women was 16.5 years.

Age: Age range was from 24 to 58 years, with a total age average of 40 years. The average age for the white woman was 38.4 while the average age for the black woman was 42.0 years.

Family Size: The family size ranged from 1 to 4 children with the median number of children being 2.33 per family. The number of children in the total sample was 72. (See Table #3)

TABLE # 3

CHILD AND AGE DISTRIBUTION FOR 37 INTERRACIALLY MARRIED MOTHERS

	SHORT-TERM (Married 10 years or less)		LONG-TERM (Married More than 10 years)	
	# of Children	Average Age(Years)	# of Children	Average Age (Years)
Black Mothers (N=7)	7	6	11	15.9
White Mothers (N=30)	23	5.5	31	14.03
TOTAL	30		42	

PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATION

Mothers Perception of Discrimination: A discrimination index (DI) for each subject was computed by coding their responses to three factors: (a) the degree to which they have perceived experiencing discrimination as a result of their interracial marriage (1-4), (b) parental reaction to their marriage and current familial contact (1-3), and (c) their perception of community acceptance of their marriage (1-2). If subjects reported having experienced no discrimination as a result of their marriage (i.e. housing, employment, police harrassment, etc.), if their parents were supportive of their marriage and current contact is frequent, and if they perceived people, in general, as being accepting, then their discrimination index would be low. On the other hand, if subjects reported perceiving a high incidence of discrimination, if they have little or no parental support or current contact, and if they perceive people in general as non-accepting of their marriage, then their discrimination index would be high. The Discrimination Index has a range from 3-9, with 3 indicating no perceived discrimination and 9 indicating a high degree of perceived discrimination. An average Discrimination Index score was computed for each of the 4 groups. (See Table 4)

TABLE #4

AVERAGE DISCRIMINATION INDEX (DI) FOR 37 INTERRACIALLY MARRIED MOTHERS

	SHORT-TERM (Married 10 years or less)	LONG-TERM (Married More than 10 years
Black Mothers N=7	DI = 5.0	DI = 4.25
White Mothers N=30	DI = 6.46	DI = 7.47

The pattern that emerged from analysis of the DI shows that white mothers perceived a greater degree of discrimination as a result of their interracial marriage than black mothers. Further, the long term married black mothers had the lowest DI (4.25), while the long-term married white mothers perceived the highest degree of discrimination with an average DI of 7.47. Perhaps the low discrimination scores of black mothers is a finding of the tendency for black mothers not to perceive discrimination as related to their marriage, but rather, to their own ethnicity.

Ninty-two percent of the subjects did perceive some degree of discrimination as a result of their marriage. It is interesting to note that only 1 black mother and 2 white mothers indicated that they had perceived absolutely no discrimination as a result of their interracial marriage.

Mothers Perception of Discrimination Effects on Marriage: Mothers that had reported some degree of perceived discrimination were asked, "Do you feel this perceived discrimination has weakened or strengthened your marriage?" One-hundred (100) percent of the respondents felt that the perceived discrimination either

had no effect on their marriage or that it strengthened their relationship. Not one mother felt any negative effects on their marriage resultant from perceived discrimination. This is a striking finding in light of the general belief that interracial marriages are adversely affected by discriminatory acts of others. Respondents indicated that negative reactions to their marriage seemed to provide a context for mutual support and bonding, rather than having a negative impact on their relationships. Given these perceptions of discrimination, mothers perceptions of their childrens' ethnic group identification was considered.

Mothers Perception of Childrens' Ethnic Group Identification: Mothers were asked to identify the racial group to which their children belonged. 47% of the white mothers (almost one-half) considered their children to be black and 43% of the white mothers considered their children mixed and/or interracial. Seventy-one (71) percent of the black mothers identified their children as black. Sixty (60) percent of the white mothers married more than 10 years considered their childrens' racial identity to be black. It is this group of white mothers that also perceived the highest degree of discrimination. There is a correlation between the white mothers perceived degree of discrimination and their ethnic identification of their child as black. This is consistent with our conceptual model which see parental perceptions of discrimination as impacting on other psychological orientations. (See Table #5)

TABLE #5

WHITE MOTHERS RACIAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION OF THEIR CHILDREN (IN PERCENTAGES)

	RACIAL GROUPS			
	Black	Interracial/or Mixed	White	Other
Short-Term (N=17)	.31	.54	Ø	.15
Long-Term (N=13)	.59	.35	Ø	.06
Totals (N=30)	.47	.43	Ø	.10

Although black mothers perceived degree of discrimination was relatively low, they did consider their children to be black. Again, black mothers had different interpretations of the source of perceived discrimination. It was not the racial structure of their marriage, but their own ethnicity which seemed to provoke discrimination. (See Table #6)

TABLE #6

BLACK MOTHERS RACIAL GROUP IDENTIFICATION OF THEIR CHILDREN (IN PERCENTAGES)

	RACIAL GROUPS			
	Black	Interracial/or Mixed	White	Other
Short-Term (N=4)	100	Ø	Ø	Ø
Long-Term (N=3)	.50	.25	Ø	.25
Totals (N=7)	.71	.14	Ø	.14

Mothers Perception of Childrens' Ethnic Group Development: Mothers perceptions of their childrens' ethnic identity development was also reported. (Do you feel your children have had a problem defining who they are...?) Parents responses were coded as perceiving children as having either a positive/healthy ethnic identification or a negative/problematic ethnic identification.

The data showed that 80% of all white mothers perceived their childrens' identity development as being positive. (See Table #7)

The higher the white mothers discrimination index, the lower the percentage of white mothers that stated their childrens' identity development was healthy. Specifically, of the long-term married white mothers, 76% reported that their children had a healthy identity. Comparatively, of the short-term married white mothers (who had reported a lower discrimination index), 85% believed that their children had a healthy identity development. (While statistical tests were not done on this data, there is no reason not to believe that this tendency may very well be a statistically significant one at this time.)

TABLE #7

WHITE MOTHERS PERCEPTION OF THEIR CHILDRENS' RACIAL IDENTITY FORMATION (IN PERCENTAGES)

	POSITIVE (Healthy Identity Development)	NEGATIVE (Problematic Identity Development)
Short-Term (N=17)	.85	.15
Long-Term (N-13)	.76	.24
Total (N=30)	.80	.20

The data showed that all short-term black mothers perceived that their children were developing a positive racial identity. It is important to note that all short-term black mothers also identified their children as being black. The pattern of long-term black mothers is different. Half of these mothers felt their children were having no problems with their ethnic identity development, while the other half did perceive some difficulties. (See Table #8)

TABLE #8

BLACK MOTHERS' PERCEPTION OF THEIR CHILDRENS RACIAL IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT (IN PERCENTAGES)

	POSITIVE (Healthy Identity Development)	NEGATIVE (Problematic Identity Development)
Short-Term (N=3)	100	ø
Long-Term (N=4)	50	50
Total (N=7)	.72	.28

In sum, compared to short-term white mothers, white mothers married a long time (a) perceived that they experienced more discrimination, (b) more often identified their children as black, and (c) were less likely to view their children as having a healthy identity development. In contrast, short-term white

mothers held (a) a slightly lower perception of discrimination, (b) were less likely to identify their children as black, and (c) were slightly more likely to believe that their children had a positive ethnic identity.

Black mothers, both short and long term, were less likely to perceive discrimination because of their marriage. Most of them identified their children as black, and most of them viewed their childrens' ethnic identity development as positive.

LINKING PSYCHOLOGICAL ORIENTATIONS WITH CHILD REARING PATTERNS

Consistent with our objective to move beyond studies which look at selected demographic variables and/or selected psychological variables, I have provided a psycho-social interpretation by comparing the child rearing approaches of the four groups of mothers with their psychological orientations.

Mothers were asked to respond to the question, "How has your interracial marriage affected the way you raise your children?" Replies were divided into two categories: (a) no difference, and (b) unique emphasis. The first category indicated that the mother did not approach child rearing any differently because of the interracial nature of her marriage. The second category reflects a reported unique child rearing emphasis because of the interracial nature of the family. These unique approaches included attention to ethnic role behaviors that mothers felt children should learn. This attention to ethnic role behaviors was reported to be transmitted through discussions, exposure and modeling. These unique child rearing approaches include parental attempts to encourage and develop in the child a strong sense of self and a tolerance for both individual and group differences.

Long-term mothers, who perceived that they has encountered the most discrimination, were also the most likely (65%) to expose their children to unique or special child rearing practices. The short-term white mothers, on the other hand, who had reported a slightly lower degree of personal discrimination were less likely to engage in unique child rearing practice. Fifty-four percent (54%)

utilized unique practices with their children as compared to long-term white mothers group where 65% engaged in unique child rearing. (See Table #9)

TABLE #9

WHITE MOTHERS' CHILD REARING APPROACHES (IN PERCENTAGES)

	NO DIFFERENCE	UNIQUE EMPHASIS
Short-Term (N=13)	.46	.54
Long-Term (N=17)	.35	.65
Total (N=30)	.40	.60

In stark contrast to both groups of white mothers, the two groups of black mothers reported essentially no difference in their child rearing practices because of their interracial marriage. Caution must be used in interpreting this finding, not only because of the small black mothers sample size but also because of the possible tendency for black mothers to perceive the personal responses of others toward them as being based on their own ethnicity, and not on the racial composition of their marriage. (See Table #10)

TABLE #10

BLACK MOTHERS' CHILD REARING APPROACHES (IN PERCENTAGES)

	NO DIFFERENCE	UNIQUE DIFFERENCE
Short-term (N=3)	100	Ø
Long-term (N=4)	.50	.50
Total (N=7)	.71	.28

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, each of the four groups in this study (a) black mothers who have been married over 10 years, (b) black mothers who have been married 10 years or less, (c) white mothers who have been married longer than 10 years, and (d) white mothers who have been married 10 years or less, did manifest different psychological orientation and reported differences in their child rearing approaches.

Other studies should be done to further investigate the nature of these psychological orientations on child rearing patterns. The impact of one's perceived social reality on child rearing practices does have implications for educational approaches as well. It is incumbent upon teachers and curriculum developers to take into account the psychological orientations and life styles of all those they teach.

Classroom environment and educational materials must reflect the similarities as well as the differences between people. It is only when people begin to respect each other, that the oppressive racist traditions of the United States can begin to be eliminated.

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